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DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
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CONTENTS

DECEMBER MCMXXXI

RECENT PLAYS : BY IVOR
BROWN ■ THE SCENIC DESIGNS
OF CHARLES RICKETTS : BY
JAMES LAVER ■ THE CON-
FERENCE AT HULL ■
DRESSING-UP THE GREAT :
BY WILLIE CLARKSON ■ A
CHRISTMAS MUMMING PLAY
■ ILLUSTRATIONS ■

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DRAMA

VOL. 10

DECEMBER MCMXXXI

NUMBER 3

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By Ivor Brown

SPECTACLE has dominated the year and spectacle found its climax at Drury Lane. "Cavalcade" is so enormous a parade of humanity that it can hardly go on tour in any shape similar to its London appearance as it has been recruited, devised, massed, and drilled by Mr. Noel Coward, dressed and decorated by Mrs. Calthrop and set before the public by Mr. Cochran. Furthermore Mr. Coward may elect not to publish its text at all; the libretto of a masque does not make good reading—I find many of Mr. Ben Johnson's masques intolerable in print, unless accompanied by Inigo Jones's designs. And "Cavalcade" is a masque of modern England during Mr. Coward's life-time. It would only make an intelligible text if accompanied by pictures of the set-pieces, and then it would lack the speed and motion which are the essence of this amazing piece of work.

"Cavalcade" is so enormous a thing that one cannot even begin to criticise it in an article of this kind. But I would call attention to the ironies which keep its patriotism astringent as well as to the humours which lighten its weight of exhortation. Above all, I would say that "Cavalcade," crowning the year's achievement in spectacle, adds the authority of a young man's genius to the tentative efforts of many in recruiting the national traditions of theatre and masquerade. Mr. Coward's social landscapes are mainly realistic, but one or two owe much to the expressionist technique. He has had ample resources, but his brilliant formula for comment on the war-years—slanting lines of men tramping in the fog behind hectic singers of patriotic songs—could be quite well carried out with small numbers and small equipment.

If "Cavalcade" is full of hints to the amateur, it also owes something to the stand which has for some years been made in repertories and little theatres for the imaginative and symbolic use of lighting and grouping as against the claims of lounge-hall realism in smoothly profitable comedies.

After "Cavalcade" came the General Election and a consequent lull in London productions. Politics, in one form or another, became unusually popular. At the New, Mr. Maltby jested with the future of Communism and at the St. Martin's, and also at its neighbour, the Ambassador's, we had amusing plays on the uneasiness of heads that wear a crown. "Lady in Waiting," at the former house, was an adaption by Mr. Harry Graham which gave us the wry smile of Ruritanian politics and a new leading lady in Miss Leonora Corbett, while Mr. Maurice Colbourne and Mr. Barry Jones at the Ambassador's had quite a success with "The Queen's Husband." One does not associate Mr. Baliol Holloway with farce in modern dress, but he gave a very sprightly performance in "Make Up Your Mind" at the Criterion. This was an adaption of a French success and Mr. Campbell Gullan's adroit and lively production made an ordinary comedy of misunderstanding rattle and race as though it were something considerably better.

The Stage Society opened its new season with Mr. C. K. Munro once more blending passion and prudence in considering the relations of foreign capital to primitive labour. "Bluestone Quarry" goes honourably on the shelf with "The Rumour" and "Progress" and "The Mountain." But plays should have a life on the stage and one can hardly prophesy

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

a large share of this for "Bluestone Quarry." A new dramatist, Mr. Ronald Mackenzie, had a first play of rare quality, "Musical Chairs," produced at the Arts Theatre Club. It congregated humours, passions, and distresses in a Chekhovian setting, but its liveliness was authentic and not derivative only. But Mr. Mackenzie will admit that he had all the luck. Fancy having Mr. Komisarjevsky to produce and John Gielgud to act in your first effort on the London stage. Bliss is it in such dawn to be alive!

It is imperative that better support should be given to Sadler's Wells, where "A Mid-

summer Night's Dream" was the November play. The 'Old Vic' last year began a great adventure by restoring the glorious Shakespearean tradition of North London in the reconstructed theatre where so much of our dramatic history was made. This year's company, led by Mr. Ralph Richardson, an admirable actor, must not be neglected because Mr. Gielgud has moved on. All members of the British Drama League who have seen one production by Mr. Harcourt Williams must hunger for another. Please remember the Wells.

THE SCENIC DESIGNS OF CHARLES RICKETTS

By James Laver

THE death of Charles Ricketts, R.A. on Wednesday, October 7th, 1931, deprived the English stage of one of the most capable and fertile of its scenic designers. He was working for the theatre to the last, and "Elizabeth of England," the sets and costumes of which were his work, had hardly been produced when he died.

He had just passed his sixty-fifth birthday, having been born at Geneva on October 2nd, 1866. His mother was a Frenchwoman and much of her son's childhood was spent in France, with the result that, although he always considered himself as English, yet there was in his manner, in his flow of conversation, and his wealth of gesture, a hint of the Continental which he never lost.

The famous friendship with Charles Shannon began when Ricketts was seventeen. The two young men met at the Lambeth Art School, became inseparable, and shared a studio together for the remainder of Rickett's life.

It is not the place here to discuss their general artistic achievement. It is sufficient to say that they threw themselves with zest into the artistic movements of the time, and during the 'eighties edited "The Dial," a magazine adorned by their own woodcuts. In book-illustration and typography they re-

presented the first reaction from the Gothic enthusiasm of William Morris. The first book produced by them was "Daphnis and Chloe" (1893) which went back for its inspiration to the early Florentine Renaissance, especially to the illustrations of the "Hypnerotomachia." "Hero and Leander," published in 1894, was simpler in style, and two years later was founded the Vale Press (the Vale was an *impasse* off the Fulham Road where Whistler lived for a time and where William De Morgan carried out some of his pottery experiments) for which Ricketts and Shannon designed three founts of type and numerous decorations, and which, during the eight years of its existence, produced a number of fine books still treasured by collectors.

Ricketts' fame as a painter grew slowly. He joined the International Society when it was founded, but did not become an Associate of the Royal Academy until 1922, nor a full Academician until 1928.

His activities were multifarious, but in no sphere perhaps was he more at home than in that of stage decoration. Before the appearance of Diaghilev and his troupe had modified public taste, Ricketts was already, in 1906, a pioneer in the protest against literal realism. He had, by nature and temperament, the two most necessary qualifi-

THE SCENIC DESIGNS OF CHARLES RICKETTS

cations for a stage designer—a profound knowledge of “period” and a strong sense of the stage picture. Some archaeological knowledge is obviously necessary for the mounting of an historical play, but it is not by itself enough, as the general impression can be fatally lost in the mere accumulation of detail, accurate enough in itself, but not necessarily in keeping with the atmosphere of the play.

Ricketts began by working for what might be called the high-brow amateurs. Wilde’s “Salome,” then banned by the Censor, was produced, together with the same author’s “Florentine Tragedy,” at the King’s Hall, Covent Garden, in 1906. In the following year he was responsible for “The Persians” at Terry’s Theatre and for Shaw’s “Don Juan in Hell” and “The Man of Destiny” put on at the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, as one of the famous Vedrenne-Barker matinees.

These early attempts were well received by the critics and led to his engagement at His Majesty’s Theatre for Mr. Laurence Binyon’s “Attila,” the title rôle being played by Oscar Asche. During 1908 Ricketts designed the decorations for two rather special performances: “Lanval” at the Playhouse and Mrs. Patrick Campbell’s “Electra” at the New Theatre.

The style he adopted for “Lear,” produced in 1909 at the Haymarket, may be studied in the sketches preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum. In “Attila” he tried to suggest blood-thirstiness; in “Lear” he strove, by the use of greenish-blue lighting and extreme simplicity of line, to create an atmosphere at once primitive and mysterious, a kind of “Stonehenge” quality, if the phrase may be permitted.

After “Lear,” Ricketts’ attention was diverted from the stage for some time, and during the War he was only responsible for a charity matinee of Masfield’s “Philip the King” at Covent Garden (1914); and for the production of Arnold Bennett’s “Judith” at the Kingsway in 1919. Those who saw the performance may remember that the costume which the artist provided for Miss Lillah MacCarthy as Judith caused, by a scantiness sensational at the time, a certain amount of hostile criticism.

Ricketts’ sets for Maeterlinck’s “The Betrothal,” produced at the Gaiety Theatre in 1921, did not excite much attention, and

his reputation with the general public may be said to date from Shaw’s “St. Joan,” produced at the New Theatre in the summer of 1924. The scenery was a simple arrangement of pillars and curtains, in front of which the slashed and scalloped clothes of the actors formed a kaleidoscopic colour harmony.

In the following year, (1925), Ricketts designed the scenery and costumes for “Henry VIII,” the last theatrical performance given at the Old Empire Theatre in Leicester Square before it was rebuilt as a cinema. The Ricketts’ drop-curtain represented a tapestry showing the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, and for the scenery itself he produced a series of Holbeinesque designs very effective in actual presentation on the stage.

In 1926 he was responsible for two productions: “Macbeth” at the Princes Theatre, and “The Mikado” at the Savoy. His re-dressing of the Mikado in eighteenth-century Japanese costume caused considerable controversy among those who hated to see the sacred canon of Gilbert and Sullivan disturbed by so much as the change of a headdress. There was perhaps some reason in this objection, for the very accuracy of Ricketts’ costumes, and the delicate beauty of their colour, made them perhaps less suitable to the characters in what is, after all, a burlesque, than the costumes they replaced. The comic quality of “The Mikado” (if any change in the traditional presentation is to be made) is what should be emphasized, although one may hesitate to approve the extreme licence of the German production in the Grosses Schauspielhaus, with its introduction of modern incongruities.

In 1929 he re-dressed the “Gondoliers” in the costume of Goldoni’s Venice, and this year he was called upon to provide the scenery and dresses for “Elizabeth of England,” the pageant play by Ferdinand Bruckner, adapted from the German by Ashley Dukes, and produced at the Cambridge Theatre in September. Ricketts was here faced with a problem, in the new technique, and his task was further complicated by the requirements of the text which demands a *décor simultané* showing the contrasted fortunes of Elizabeth of England and Philip of Spain. The skill with which Ricketts surmounted these difficulties may still be seen at the moment of writing.

THE SCENIC DESIGNS OF CHARLES RICKETTS

The art of the stage designer is, by its nature, so ephemeral that students of the theatre may be glad to know what permanent records of Ricketts' work have been preserved. The Department of Engraving in the Victoria & Albert Museum possesses some nine or ten examples, including the backcloth which he designed for the Baptism scene in the last Act of "Henry VIII." This has already been reproduced in "Drama" (vol. IV, Jan. 1926), and it is interesting to note that the "Protestant Fresco," showing Henry trampling on the emblems of Papacy, was omitted in the actual production. His designs for Arnold Bennett's "Judith" and for the projected stage setting of "The Eumenides" were exhibited at the International Theatre Exhibition in 1922. Ricketts also designed a stage setting for "Agamemnon" (1909), which was never produced, and the same fate befell his designs for "The Winter's Tale" (1925) and for "Sakuntala" (1922). All these unrealised projects are represented by drawings in the national collection, and Mr. Thomas Lowinsky has just presented to the Museum a very beautiful design for two costumes in "The Mikado."

Ricketts' work as a whole is curiously homogeneous. He pursued his own way, influenced neither by the gorgeous colouring of Bakst nor by more modern developments in the direction of abstraction. He delighted in the craftsmanship of his task, frequently stencilling designs on dresses with his own hands, and he never lost sight of the unity of the stage-picture. His work at its best had a poetic beauty difficult to forget, and represents an important contribution to the history of scenic design in England.

LIST OF STAGE PRODUCTIONS DESIGNED BY CHARLES RICKETTS.

Compiled from the Programmes and Cuttings in the Gabrielle Enthoven Collection.

1906.	Salome.	King's Hall, Florentine Tragedy.	Covent Garden.	June 10th.
1907.	The Persians	Terry's Theatre		March 23rd.
1907.	Don Juan in Hell.	Vedrenne-Barker Matinees, Royal Court Theatre.		June 4th.
1907.	Attila.	His Majesty's		August 15th.
1908.	Lanval (T. E. Ellis)	The Playhouse		May 14th.

1908.	Electra	New Theatre	Nov. 27th.
1909.	King Lear	Haymarket	Sept. 8th.
1914.	Philip the King	Covent Garden (Charity Matinee)	Nov. 5th.*
1919.	Judith	Kingsway	April 30th.
1921.	The Betrothal	Gaiety	Jan. 8th.
1924.	Saint Joan	New Theatre	Mar. 26th.
1925.	Henry VIII.	Empire	Dec. 23rd.
1926.	Macbeth	Princes	Dec. 24th.
1926.	Mikado	Savoy	Dec. 16th.
1928.	The Coming of Christ	Canterbury Cathedral	May 28th.
1929.	The Gondo- liers	Savoy	October 21st.
1931.	Elizabeth of England	Cambridge Theatre	Sept. 30th

* Previously done at Bristol on October 26th.

MY FIRST PLAY

O would-be dramatists who deeply feel
The almost irresistible appeal
To see the creatures of your teeming brain
Appear upon the stage, let me restrain
Your burning ardour with a moral tale!
Listen; and then may common sense prevail!

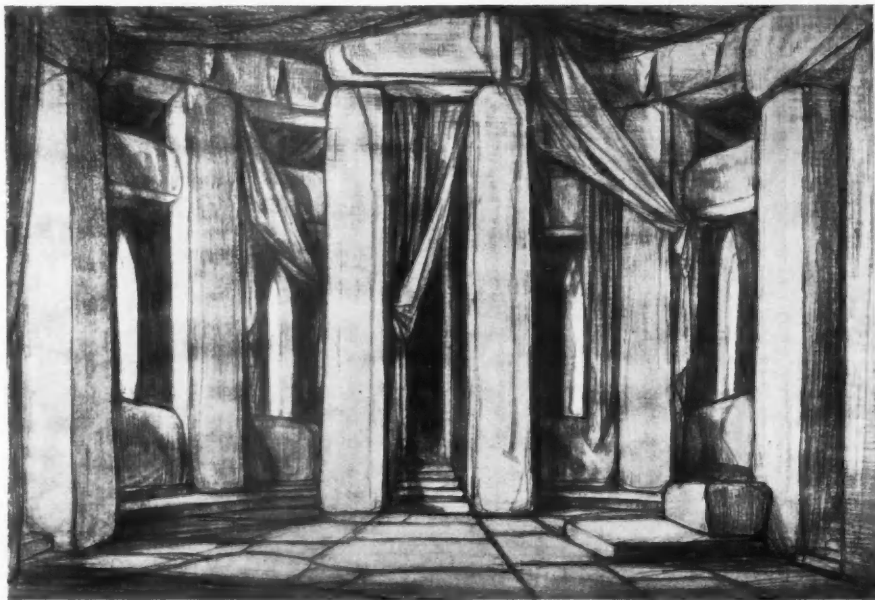
Long years ago I wrote a play: its theme
A kind of Coleridge-cum-Milton dream,
With all the mystic lure of Kubla Khan,
Yet meant to justify God's ways to man.
My aim was serious; I longed to be
A friend to man throughout posterity,
And point the way to paradise. But lest
Its heavy theme proved wearisome, I dressed
It in a delicate, fantastic style
Designed to titillate and raise a smile
Amongst the connoisseurs of theatredom.

The characters!—had famed Pygmalion come
To earth again, himself could not create
Figures so life-like, truly animate
And three dimensional. I kept in mind
The theatre folk, and carefully combined
Attractive parts with subtle psychic scenes
For Schwabe-Haseit lighting stunt machines.
And though perhaps I should not, yet I say
There never was before so good a play.
My first indeed, but maybe too my best,
I thought, and left to managers the rest.

Long years ago so many years ago!
Of London's four and forty theatres still
Are two which have not had my play, and so
Perchance it will be staged, perchance it will.
Until it is (the Censor safely passed),
My first, best, only play remains my last.

So, would-be playwrights, ere you pen a part,
I urge you take this mournful tale to heart:
Think of the time you thus may spend in vain
And hesitate . . . and think . . . and hesitate again!

VERNON H. PORTER.



DESIGN FOR STAGE SETTING FOR
KING LEAR. HAYMARKET THEATRE,
1909. BY CHARLES RICKETTS, R.A.
FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAWING IN
THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM.



DESIGN FOR COSTUME OF LEONTES
IN A PROJECTED PRODUCTION OF
"THE WINTER'S TALE." BY CHARLES
RICKETTS, R.A. FROM THE ORIGINAL
IN THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM.

DRESSING-UP THE GREAT

By Willie Clarkson

NOW that I have decided to retire all sorts of memories of people I have dressed are crowding my mind. At Osborne they used to say I was the only tradesman Queen Victoria ever addressed, and she spoke to me more than four hundred times. Private theatricals and charades then held the place of gramophone and wireless, and "dressing up" was a favourite royal pastime. I paid at least three visits a year to Balmoral and Osborne to help the young princes and princesses in their frolics and all the work had to be done single handed for the Queen did not like the idea of anyone else seeing her daughters with rouge and lipstick on their faces.

Once, King Edward, then Prince of Wales, Princess Beatrice, Prince Henry and Prince Victor of Battenburg and Princess Louise all took part in an elaborate pageant play for the Queen's amusement. Rehearsals meant a busy time for me and I was always safety-pinning up one princess or the other. One day Princess Louise told me—"The Queen said at breakfast that she does not know what she should do without Mr. Clarkson." "Your Royal Highness," I replied, "do me a favour—ask Her Majesty not to try." The Osborne household laughed over this remark for days and when I met the Prince of Wales a year later, he told me that the Queen had not forgotten my saying and always spoke of me as "Indispensable Mr. Clarkson."

After that the royal family took a great interest in my work. One "first night" I had a seat in the circle when King Edward and Queen Alexandra were in the royal box. At one point in the play the hero had to clutch a lock of the heroine's hair which she, to show her disdain, cut off and threw at his feet. When this part of the play was reached, I saw their Majesties regarding me with great amusement.

Later, during the interval, Lord Lorn came round with a request from Queen Alexandra to know if I was anxious about my wig. She seemed to think that I had looked nervous during the cutting operation. I had to explain for her benefit that the lock which was tugged and cut was not really part of the wig at all, but a spare tress, fixed on detachable silk.

One of my most thrilling possessions is a sketch made by Sir Herbert Tree himself to show me exactly what sort of wig he wanted for his part in a play called "Money." We were talking in my little fitting room and I suppose I was being particularly dense, for he suddenly picked up a stick of grease paint and began to draw with it on the mirror. He made sketches of himself, full face and side face, to show me exactly how the wig must look. It had to be a Disraelian affair, I remember, with a lock hanging over the forehead.

A coat of varnish preserved the Tree sketches for us and many years later, Bruce Barnesfather saw them and could not resist the temptation to add a picture of "Old Bill" so that we should make no mistakes when dressing up that gentleman for his first public performance. To-day "Old Bill" and Tree share the honours of my looking glass together.

Sarah Bernhardt was always in a hurry and I often dashed over to Paris to execute some special commission for her. One of the most difficult costumes she ever ordered was the white coat with green facings and knee breeches that she wore as the hero in *L'Aiglon*. Even with her figure it was not easy to insure a perfect masculine fit and nothing short of perfection ever satisfied her.

Irving, Ellen Terry, Forbes Robertson and Arthur Bouchier were life long customers and always asked my opinion of their latest part. In one way they were all difficult clients for no one is so hard to please as the great artist, bent on doing justice to himself. I have watched the fame of most of the modern stars grow from the beginning and can remember the days when an un-important music hall comedian, named Chaplin, used to come into the shop and spend hours choosing a moustache.

Dressing the Military Tournament is quite a big job and I have done it for thirty-six years. The soldiers who wear the uniform of their regiment of two hundred or more years ago do not regard their excursion into the past as "dressing-up." They realise that all these clothes were "regulation" in their time. The uniforms have to be correct in every detail and the men are taught to wear

DRESSING-UP THE GREAT

and clean them just as an Elizabethan recruit or one of the time of the Napoleonic wars would have done. When they are dressed as savages or women for the purposes of a combined display that is quite another matter and a good deal of ragging goes on.

In addition to providing for theatrical folk we do a great deal of work for fancy dress dances. For days before the Chelsea Arts Ball there is hardly standing room on the premises. Queen Alexandra, the Duke of Orleans, the Duchess of Teck and many other members of the royal family are among the celebrities for whom I have made costumes. King Edward was always a special problem as he did not like to wear anything which

exaggerated his figure, which in later years, as he said himself, did not need magnifying.

To-day no one wants the old elaborate fancy dresses, the suits of armour and full Elizabethan robes in which they were once willing to parade for a whole evening. The demand especially among men, is for something simple that can be exchanged for ordinary evening dress half way through the proceedings and does not need an elaborate make-up. Pierrots and cow boys are popular and almost every man stands out for trousers. Female taste has not altered so much, for with a little encouragement, every woman can fancy herself as Cleopatra or Helen of Troy.

A NOTE FROM FINLAND

By Bror Danielsson

THE Finnish Theatre, like the Scandinavian one, is selective, both in matter and form, in its repertory as well as in its manner of acting. Anything essentially new is seldom produced, but the best from all parts of the world is absorbed after careful examination and gets a specific national "cut."

The former prevalence of Swedish as the educational language of Finland grows less and less, and the Theatre is being nationalised on a Finnish basis. From this it results that the Swedish theatres, loose more and more in importance, and the actual government looks at the Kansallasteatteri in Helsingfors as the National Theatre of Finland.

There are permanent theatres in most of the bigger towns and amateur (labour) theatres all over Finland. Here, as in the other Scandinavian countries, the best actors from the big theatres go touring, transmitting to the most remote parts of the country a familiarity with good scenic art. These theatres have an accomplished organisation, which sends out organisers, procures a repertory and arranges instructive courses. Beside local support, the Finnish theatres receive an annual grant from the government. This amounts at present to 1,200,000 fmk. The distribution of this sum is arranged by a board of dramatic experts, appointed by the department of public instruction.

There has been written one really great Finnish drama, "Gallows-man" by Rumar

Schildt. Everything is great in this Winter's Tale, in which two people within four walls and in less than an hour, give the key to their lives. With admirable art the poet has understood how to turn the legend of the mystical wooden idol into a symbol of the boundless life-egoism that leads to a sure destruction and whose fatal power can only be overcome by an equally boundless sacrifice. The proud humbleness of love has never been given a simpler and more beautiful shape than the part of Maria. Combining bitter realism with naively popular realism, the play reminds one of Trist drama. But the key-note is clearly Nordic, something of Gosta Berling and Fänrick Stal at one and the same time. The leading part, the old major, requires an ingenious interpreter and for me this part is inextricably associated with the name of Paul Reumert.

In Helsingfors I have seen three remarkable productions this year: in the Kansallasteatteri, "Marius" by Marcel Pagnol and "Intohimot jalarien varjossa" (Desire under the Elms) by Eugene O'Neill, and in the Finnish Opera the ballet "The Blue Pearl" by Erkki Melartin.

"Marius" is the old play of Solveig and Peer Gynt transported in a southern environment, where the sun shines with barley-blue shadows on the sands, and where the gaudy smudges of the swarming throng tone down this love-story in sea-blue and blood-

A NOTE FROM FINLAND

red. I am sure everybody in the audience got a real yearning to sit one evening in the inn of father César, seeing the steamers glide in and out of the harbour, hearing the roar of the steam-winchies and drinking until Suez, Madras and Columbo would loom before the stay-at-home

"Intohimot jalavien varjossa" is one of the strongest and most remarkable plays I have seen in Scandinavia. Where the dramas of Eugene O'Neill are played the gale is always blowing up on the worn boards which represent the world. This condensed atmosphere of inhuman passions, which dominates the fate-saturated play from beginning to end, is akin to the dark and heavy Finnish characters,

elemental in its calmness as well as in its fury. Kalima, the producer, had worked out this correspondence very well.

"The Blue Pearl" is inspired from old legends. The choreographic frame is the work of Kaarlo Eronen and in order to suggest how intimately the music fills this frame Prof. Melartin has called it a 'concert for the human body.' The result has been charming. The old dances, Gaillard, Gavotte and Menuet in the first act, the dances of the sea-monsters and the oceans in the second act, and at last the lively and partly humorous national dances in the third act, only give a very imperfect suggestion of the imagination and versatility displayed by the composer.

"HE OUGHT TO GO ON THE STAGE"

By Cecil Home

HOW often one hears this remark about some clever young actor whose performance has delighted and astonished the audience. Yet even outstanding amateur achievement is not by itself any reliable indication of success on the regular stage.

Surely the reason is frequently misunderstood? It is not that there is any magic in playing for money which automatically renders a given professional superior to a given amateur: but that acting as a business and acting as a hobby are two entirely different jobs. The qualifications, though no doubt similar, are by no means identical. The very freshness, simplicity and freedom from stage "tricks," sometimes so pleasing in the talented untrained person, are the result not of knowledge but of blissful ignorance. It is a happy effect hit off by nature and not worked out by art.

Why, then, should this gifted person trouble to learn to do by technical methods what he can apparently achieve by natural means?

There are two reasons:—first, because the sincere simulation of real life by a sound trained actor, who has developed his voice and knows exactly how much to emphasize or exaggerate, is much more effective in a theatre than any amount of spontaneous realism; secondly, because the satisfactory repetition of a performance dependent upon inspiration night after night, at matinées and even "twice-nightly," is impossible.

The budding player must rely upon something more than mere excitement and the mood.

He must master the technical ground-work which will enable him to give a telling and seemingly life-like performance when and where he pleases, with a splitting headache or when so worried as to be practically incapable of forgetting himself and his woes. This is where the amateur ceases and the professional begins.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the process of laboriously acquiring this requisite stage technique the freshness is lost and the once brilliant amateur appears, for a time at least, to disappoint the expectations of his friends. He is trying to convey repeatedly by skill the effects which he formerly secured on occasion by feeling.

But if he strives honestly his innate talent will soon begin to reassert itself in a lasting and far more convincing form; for, in spite of certain spectacular "successes" by young players (who may be special "types" or have money or influence behind them), the only real success is that which is built upon a foundation of concrete and not of sand. If it were otherwise acting would not be an art.

But it calls for courage and perseverance and—at any rate without backing—no young person should attempt this calling who is not prepared to fight his or her way through bitter disappointment and small and, may be, thankless parts.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF
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THE Hull Conference, so far as its business meetings are concerned, is dealt with with elsewhere in this issue. But mere business is far from being the only—or even the main—object in such a gathering together of League members and representatives. Our art of the theatre is, after all, a social art, and the friendly intercourse of its practitioners remains a powerful and useful factor in all Drama League activities. By past tradition, and by present achievement, Kingston-upon-Hull proved itself peculiarly adapted for such a conference as was held there during the last week-end in October. Nearly a hundred and fifty delegates assembled from the Midlands, from Scotland and from the West, while we were glad to welcome, and to be welcomed by, a notable phalanx of stage enthusiasts from Hull and its neighbourhood. Needless to say the hospitality offered by the Lord Mayor of Hull, by the Sheriff, by Mr. Shepherd of the Hull Museums, and by all those connected with our official hosts, the Hull Repertory Theatre and the Hull Playgoers' Society, was of the most ample and generous kind.

Following fast on the Lord Mayor's Reception at Guildhall on the Friday afternoon, came the performance of "Street Scene" at the Repertory Theatre. This was a really fine performance, with Mr. Carl Bernard, the Director of the theatre, in the part of the Italian teacher of music, and with Miss Natalie Moya as Rose Maurrant. Everyone was delighted with the production, and with the Repertory Theatre itself which is one of the few entirely adequate Repertory Theatres in the country. Its many amenities, both behind the curtain and in front, offer a striking example of the way in which persistence and intelligence can overcome all difficulties. For it must be remembered that the repertory theatre in Hull is of comparatively recent growth, and that it started under very different conditions from those which obtain to-day.

On the Saturday evening the Hull Playgoers' Society entertained us at their own Little Theatre with a performance of "The Yellow Jacket," very beautifully produced by Mrs. Janet Downs. Some idea of the quality of the staging is given by the photograph which we reproduce on another page, and the acting throughout was on a comparably high level. Many delegates expressed the hope that this front-rank amateur society might one day see its way to enter the National Festival of Community Drama. There is no doubt that if and when they find it possible to do so, they will go far.

We must also record the kind welcome offered by Principal Morgan and the Authorities of Hull University College. The Saturday afternoon meeting of the Conference was held there, and it was followed by a reception and then by an excellent performance of "The Dear Departed" by a Lincolnshire Womens' Institute—the result of the extra-mural tuition in drama which is now being undertaken by the University under the direction of Prof. Searles.

The Conference closed on the Sunday with a memorable Sermon preached by the Rev. C. R. Tardrew, at a special service at Hull Parish Church; a visit to Beverley Minster in the afternoon; and a final reception kindly given to the delegates at the University Womens' Hostel.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

"Acting." A book for amateurs. By Seymour Hicks. Cassell. 5s.

"I want to go on the Stage." By Sir Frank Benson. Benn. 3s. 6d.

"Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Costume." By Mary G. Houston. A. & C. Black. 10s. 6d.

"English Costume of the Eighteenth Century." Drawn by Iris Brooke. Described by James Laver. A. & C. Black. 6s.

"The Theatre." By J. W. Marriot. Harrap. 5s.

FEW of the many people who write handbooks for the amateur seem to realise that there are now thousands of amateur actors who have long ago learned the A B C of acting and have no use for the sort of book which sends its readers back to the kindergarten and begins by explaining which is the left and right of the stage, or by carefully defining a backcloth in simple language. Such books are more than just unhelpful. They are definitely harmful. The average amateur actor or producer who buys them, and reads all over again the elementary advice which he has read and digested so often before, is apt to flatter himself that he has learned everything possible about the rules of the game. Therefore Mr. Seymour Hicks' book is particularly welcome, as it is "a chat about acting with those amateurs whom I am supposing are fairly experienced exponents of the actor's art." Needless to say, the author does not make the usual mistake of attempting to provide a guide to acting, producing, stage-management, lighting, scenery, make-up, and business management all within a couple of hundred pages. All these subjects are touched upon, but frankly in the spirit of someone chatting at random of his own experiences, and giving his ideas and pieces of advice for what they are worth. The book is packed full of just the sort of advice which one seldom finds in those correct and pedestrian books written by amateurs for amateurs. Although the author describes it as "a book for amateurs," there are few professionals who will read it without picking up some useful tips.

Sir Frank Benson's book is another which does not profess to be a complete handbook on the subject, but claims to be no more than "some inadequate utterances of a wandering actor." On almost every page the author insists on the necessity for absolute physical fitness in the actor. "Again and again let me beg the student to acquire efficiency and control of the bodily instrument, that his brain may function accurately and his body give swift expression to his thought." On another page he declares that "Grace is the inseparable accompaniment of power and efficiency." His recipe for acquiring this grace is simple enough. It consists of a list of a dozen different forms of athletics, and ends with a reminder that it used to be a tradition in the profession for leading actors on a Sunday afternoon to stroll down to St. Albans, have lunch and walk back again in the afternoon. But even if Sir Frank is something of a fanatic on this subject of physical fitness, his advice is particularly valuable at the present time when students at dramatic schools are far too apt to expect to be taught a series of postures and grimaces to express various emotions, instead of developing

their minds to be intelligently receptive to the meaning of their lines, and developing their bodies to be a flexible instrument for the expression of their meaning.

A book on costume which I had been impatiently awaiting is the second volume of Miss Houston's "Technical History of Costume." The first volume dealt with Ancient Egyptian, Assyrian and Persian Costumes; the present volume begins with the Cretan costumes of 1800 B.C. and continues through the centuries in Greece and Rome to the Byzantine styles of the twelfth century A.D. In most respects this is a model of what a practical book on costume should be. It has few airs and graces, but both the selection of facts and their arrangement are admirable. Every illustration of costume given has been actually cut out and made up before being sketched, with the result that the directions as to how they can be made are exceptionally clear and definite. A particularly useful feature of the book is the amount of space given to explanations of the various ways of wearing the toga, a garment which utterly bewilders most actors.

"English Costume of the Eighteenth Century" combines charm and wit, usefulness and decorativeness, every bit as successfully as the previous books by these two collaborators. But perhaps the collaborators should be counted as three, not two, for author and illustrator owe much to the way in which the publisher has produced the book in a manner so perfectly in keeping with the spirit of the text and pictures. The period has given Miss Brooke even more scope in her illustrations than before, and every one of her forty pages of illustrations will delight anyone with a feeling for line and colour. Remember this book when you are trying to think of Christmas presents.

It would be easy to criticise Mr. Marriot's book on the grounds that his fund of information is in some respects decidedly scrappy and out-of-date. For instance, in his long chapter on the repertory movement he displays more knowledge of the pre-war repertory theatres than those of the present day, and makes no mention of the only two repertory theatres which during the last three or four years have consistently held to a progressive and experimental policy, both in their choice of plays and their methods of presenting them. But Mr. Marriot disarms criticism by explaining at the outset that his book is intended "for young people whose ages range from fifteen or sixteen to twenty or twenty-one." The author is too modest. The book is written without any suggestion of that condescending "told to the young" manner which usually afflicts authors with Mr. Marriot's intention, and anybody interested in the theatre, whatever their age may be, will find this an eminently readable, lively and vigorous survey of the subject. One of the best sections of the book is the list of plays which the reader is recommended to see if he gets the chance. It is a refreshingly catholic and unhackneyed selection, in which "It Pays to Advertise," "The Middle Watch" and "Ambrose Applejohn's Adventures" rub shoulders with the plays of Granville-Barker and Gordon Bottomley. Repertory companies, whether amateur or professional will find it worth while to study this list, as it contains several first-rate plays which deserve more frequent performance.

A CHRISTMAS MUMMERS' PLAY

AMONG the many writers of village plays at the present day, few, it seems, have thought to study the relics of rustic drama and pageantry that are still available in print or as survivals. Yet in them, if anywhere, may be found evidence of the kind of drama that "comes natural" to men who work in the fields. For untold centuries field-labourers have piously fulfilled "the customs," modifying them a little, working-in topical allusions, but preserving their lusty pagan symbolism and rough humour, untouched by civilised sentiment. A mixture of dance, song and drama, with a text that slides in and out of verse and prose, much as do Shakespeare's early plays, the survivals must be much the same as what he saw when he was a boy. Compared with the typical modern village play, good or bad, the Mummers' play lacks plot, characterisation and intelligibility, but it is more robust, more virile; things happen; the costumes and properties are striking; the music has "go" if no higher quality. Horns, concertinas, fiddles and bells make more jovial music than can be got out of a piano. Where survivals exist the solemn passages and the merry alike are performed with a simple directness and depth of feeling that give them an unconscious air of dignified self-respect, seldom to be seen in tutored productions.

The manuscript of "The Lincolnshire Plough Jaggs," as given here, is beautifully written, in pencil, by an old labourer, who committed it to paper this summer, thirty-one years after he played the Lady for the last time, at Somerby. He explains that the last part, the Briggsides play (a "side" is a team of Morris dancers) was known to him before the first, the Lincolnside play, which was taught him by a mate. The tune to which some of the songs were sung is called "Sentry-box."

Stage directions in round brackets are his; parentheses in square brackets are editorial.

LINCOLNSHIRE PLOUGH JAGGS.

(Enter Clown.)

Clown. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, I give you this bold call! As Christmas time's a merry time, I come to see you all. I hope you won't be offended with what I've got to say; for a few more, ladies and gentlemen, will pass this way. Some

can dance and some can sing. At your consent they shall come in. [The team numbers twenty or more.]

(Enter Music Jack.)

Music Jack. In comes I, Old Music Jack. I'll play a tune before I go back. [He is accompanied by other musicians.]

[Enter two or three dancing, frisky Hobby-horses, drawing a wooden plough.]

Horse (speaking). In comes I, a four-year old colt, The best old colt that ever was bought. Either.....gallop or trot, Run fourteen miles in fifteen hours without sweating a hair.

(Enter Ribboner.)

Ribboner. In comes I who have lost my mate. Dropping tears roll down my cheeks. Pity my condition here this day. For a false young woman I'm in despair.

Clown. Pray the man don't die in that despair, for in a short time the lady will be here.

(Enter Lady singing, Music Jack plays.)

Lady. Behold a Lady, bright and fair, Great fortune and sweet charms! It was a shame that I was torn From my lover's arms.

He said if I wouldn't wed with him, As you will understand, He'd enlist for a soldier and go to a foreign land.

(Enter Sergeant or Soldier.)

Soldier. I'm a recruiting Sergeant arrived here just now. I've come to enlist all that follow horse, cart or plough. Likewise tinkers, tailors, pedlars, nailers and all the fools, as I advance. Ah! Have I come here to see a fool dance?

Clown. Not a fool like me! Dance, sing, dance or say, or we'll all run away!

Soldier (singing). Now, my lads, is the time for enlisting! Time away shall sweetly pass!

You can have all kinds of liquor, Likewise court a bonny lass. Ten bright guineas shall be your bounty, If along with me you'll go,

And your hat shall be trimmed with ribbons—

Likewise court the girl you know!

(Speaking to Ribboner). Now, young man, will you receive the King's shilling, and serve bold Tom seven years to fourteen?

Lady (sings). Now you see my love's enlisted

And entered volunteer, But I don't intend to sigh for him Nor yet to shed a tear.

I ne'er intend to sigh for him,

But I mean to let him know

I'll have another sweetheart

And along with him I'll go.

Soldier (singing).

Madam, I've got gold and silver, Madam, I've got houses and land; Madam, I've a world of treasure, All at thy command.

Clown (sings)

A handsome lass will never maintain you, Beauty will soon fade away; The prettiest flower in all the summer, In the winter dies away.

A CHRISTMAS MUMMERS' PLAY

Lady (singing).

What care I for your gold and silver?
What care I for your houses and land?
What care I for your world of treasure?
All I want is a handsome man.

Clown. Ah! Ah! That's me you want! (*Takes her by the arm.*) Now we're going to be married. You can all come to the wedding. What you like best, bring with you. But we'll have a jolly good spread.—a leg of a lark, a roasted louse, a farthing cake—cut such a thumping toast of that!—and a barley chaff dumpling, buttered with wool—if you can't nag [gnaw] it, you'll have it to pull.

(*Enter Indian King.*)

Indian King. 'Ware out, my lads, I'm the Indian King. They have all been trying me to slay, but I'm alive this very day.

Soldier. Stand back, bold Slasher, let no more be said: For if I draw my dripping sword, I'll cut off thy head.

Indian King. How can'st thou cut off my head? My head is made of iron. My body is made of steel. My hands and feet and knuckle-bones, I challenge thee to feel.

(*Soldier strikes him down with sword.*)

Clown. Ten pounds for a doctor!

Soldier. Twenty for him to stop away!

Clown. Fifty for him to come!

(*Enter the Doctor.*)

Doctor. In comes I, the Doctor!

Clown. How came you to be a Doctor?

Doctor. By my travels, sir.

Clown. Where have you travelled?

Doctor. England, Ireland, Scotland, Spain! Nineteen times round the world and back again!

Clown. What pains can you cure?

Doctor. Hipsy, pipsy, palsy, gout,
Pains within and pains without!
Set a tooth or draw a leg!

I once cured a man—he'd been in the grave nine days, and every time he moved the bag-pipes played.

Clown. Can you cure this man?

Doctor. Yes, undoubtedly I can.

Clown. Very well, Doctor, try your skill.

Doctor. By your consent and so I will.

Take hold of my hat, gloves and bamboo walking-stick, till I feel his pulse.

Clown. Is he dead, Doctor?

Doctor. Dead? No. He has been trying a new experiment, sir. Been living on cold potato-tops and had no water—caused very bad indigestion.—Can you cough?—Put out your tongue.—Take a drop out of my bottle. Let it carefully run down your throat. It will heal the wound, and cleanse the blood, and do the soul a world of good. Then rise up, Jack, and have a dance! If you can't dance, we can sing, so rise up now and let's begin.

(*All together sing.*)

All. We are not the London Actors that acts upon the stage. We are the Jolly Plough Boys, who ploughs for little wage. The mud it is so nasty, and the mire it is so strong! Remember us poor plough boys who plough the fields along!

(*Enter Beesum Betty, also called Old Lame Jane.*)

Betty. In comes I, Old Lame Betty, tripping over the meadow. Once I was a blooming girl but now I am a down old widow. Whip behind and whip before, clear out, my lads, I'll sweep the floor! O Lor', Missus, isn't our Fool and Doctor nasty,

dirty old beggars? [*The itinerant quack and his assistant—often a funny man—were peculiarly hateful to the Wise Woman as usurpers of her medical functions.*]
I'll clean all this muck up before I go!

All (sing). Good Master and good Mistress, you see our fool's gone out. We are making it our business to follow him about. We thank you for civility, for what you have given us here, and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

At the entrance of the Indian King, it will be noticed that the play becomes a version of the St. George play—a Spring "custom," transferred to Christmas. Indian King is a variant of Turkish Knight, and derives from the Winter-Man of primitive ritual, who is black-faced because he is the Dark Season, and also because he is Death, the Slayer or Slasher. The gay, red-coated Sergeant or Soldier is a frequent variant of St. George, who derives from the Summer-man of primitive ritual, when but two seasons—the Bright and the Dark—were recognised. He is at once the Sun-spirit and the Spirit of Vegetation. Sometimes he is encased and hidden in a framework of green leaves, and is Green George or Jack-in-the-Green or the Green Man (patron saint of innumerable inns). Sometimes he is King-of-the-May, in green leaves, and red, gold and white flowers, and sometimes there are two of him, a Green Man and a Sun Man. In about half the plays extant he is killed and is brought to life again, or rises from the dead of his own accord. That was the old ritual, still enacted in Thrace. When he became Saint George or King George, some English villagers thought it unsuitable that he should be vanquished even with a resurrection ahead of him, so he was victor from the first. The Doctor may have come into the ritual from the itinerant quacks of the *Commedia dell'Arte* and their ancestors in Roman mime; some connect him with Aesculapius. As for St. George's connections-by-ritual—they include Dionysus, Attys, Adonis, Osiris and Hippolytus. Old Betty, with her besom, "beesum" or birch-broom, is a typical figure of broad rustic satire. She derives from the days when the Wise Woman's or White Witch's broom was a thing of power for help in the home. With it, in Spring-time, the Wise Woman would give a final sweeping to every house-place, to get rid of the devils of disease and ill-luck that invade the dark corners in the winter season and cannot be removed by the brooms of mere housewives. Nowadays the Wise

A CHRISTMAS MUMMERS' PLAY

Woman's domestic representative is the humble char, but she is still recognised as the wielder of superior strength and skill in the still-extant ritual of the Spring-cleaning, wholly materialistic as it has become.... More obscure is the ceremonial significance of the earlier part of this play. We can, however, trace a likeness between the Lady and the May Queen. The Lady's story is of a jilting. Lightly she dismisses one love and chooses another. Whatever the text, that is her "custom." Can it be that here we have a relic of annual marriage? There are other

traces of such a form of matrimony up and down the country-side.... From time immemorial the casts have been all male. In all survivals, the Lady, the May Queen and Old Betty are still played by men. In many a revival the cast is all female. Old Betty's militant, man-despising attitude hails from the period when the patriarchal age was effecting the subjugation of women. One aspect of the modern triumph of feminism is to be noted in the mild and mannerly uni-sexual performances of the Women's Institutes.

MARGARET MACNAMARA.

MINUTES OF THE HULL CONFERENCE

MINUTES of the Annual Conference of the BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE held on Saturday, October 31st, at 10.30 a.m. in the Guildhall, Hull, and continued at 2.30 p.m. at University College, Hull.

Present—Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth (in the Chair) and 143 Delegates and Members.

Letters of regret at inability to be present and containing good wishes for the Conference were read from Professor G. P. Baker, Mr. Holford Knight, K.C., M.P., Mr. C. B. Purdom and Mr. Alec L. Rea.

Minutes of the last Conference which had been printed in the December 1930 issue of "Drama" were taken as read and signed.

Proposed by Miss Elizabeth Blake, seconded by Hon. Mary Pakington—

"That this Conference, bearing in mind the important part Drama can play in maintaining a knowledge and use of pure English as well as in increasing mutual understanding among the different parts of the British Empire recommends the formation of a sub-committee to deal specially with Community Drama in the Dominions and Crown Colonies of the Empire with special reference to the immediate needs of New Zealand."

In moving the resolution Miss Blake said that New Zealand was in danger of starving intellectually and artistically. Travelling players had become fewer and poorer—Schools and Colleges were backward in literature and drama, and many New Zealanders thought it affected to speak good English. When first she attempted to produce a Shakespearean play in New Zealand she omitted Shakespeare's name on the posters and programmes with very successful results. A Scheme of Community Drama with a yearly Festival would be a real godsend, and in order to set things going on the right lines the first need was a thoroughly trained producer, young, tactful and healthy, who would come out for a couple of years. She therefore urged the Conference to appoint a strong sub-committee in this country to deal with Community Drama not only in New Zealand but in all the Dominions of the Empire.

In seconding the resolution Miss Pakington said that as the commercial bonds of the Empire to Great Britain would shortly be drawn closer so also the cultural bonds should not be neglected.

Mr. Whitworth reported that he had received letters evincing interest in the proposal from the High Commissioners of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the Irish Free State.

Miss Kelly supported the resolution as she had been in touch with the problem in South Africa—a problem which concerned the native population and was entirely different from that presented by Miss Blake—but one which nevertheless needed wise guidance.

Miss Fearnough (Chesterfield Playgoers) who had had experience of dramatic work in Canada, supported the resolution.

Mr. Sharman proposed an amendment to the effect that the following sentence should be added to the resolution—"and to undertake to appoint a suitable producer to go to New Zealand."

Dr. Pycroft (South Elmsall Arts Fellowship) seconded the amendment.

The resolution as amended was read as follows:—

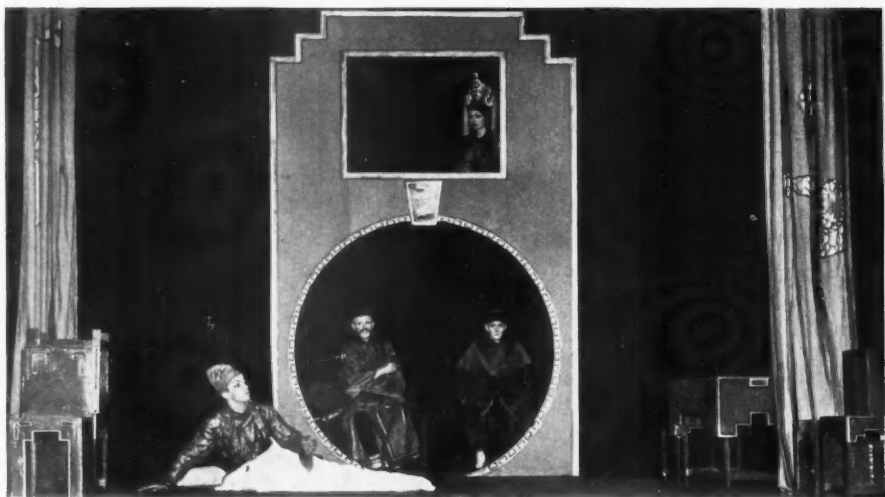
"That this Conference, bearing in mind the important part Drama can play in maintaining a knowledge and use of pure English as well as in increasing mutual understanding among the different parts of the British Empire recommends the formation of a sub-committee to deal specially with Community Drama in the Dominions and Crown Colonies of the Empire with special reference to the immediate needs of New Zealand and to undertake to appoint a suitable producer to go to New Zealand."

and on being put to the meeting was carried unanimously.

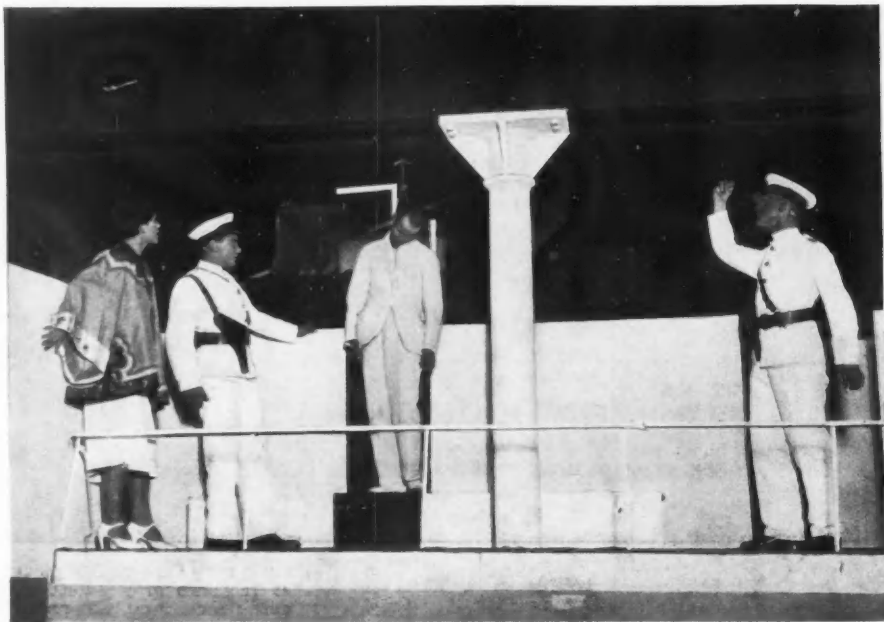
Miss Fogerty on behalf of the Governors of the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art offered two years free training to a producer for work in New Zealand. This proposal was received with acclamation.

3. Proposed by Miss Elsie Fogerty:—

"That it is desirable to undertake a regional survey of Dialect throughout the British Isles, and that the help of the British Drama League should be enlisted for this purpose."



SCENE FROM "THE YELLOW JACKET"
AS PRODUCED BY THE HULL PLAY-
GOER'S SOCIETY ON THE OCCASION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE AT HULL,
31ST OCTOBER, 1931.



SCENE FROM "ROAR CHINA!"
BY S. T. TRETISKOV, AS PRO-
DUCED BY THE UNNAMED
SOCIETY, MANCHESTER.

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MINUTES OF THE HULL CONFERENCE

Seconded by Mr. Edward Lingard (Stockport Garrick Society).

In moving this resolution Miss Fogerty said the doom of dialect was near when it was only spoken roughly and vulgarly by the uneducated. One thing was certain children should be taught to be bilingual in the best sense of the word. If standard English were taught scientifically it should improve and not hurt dialect. Miss Fogerty suggested that a phonetic tabulation should be made of some thirty variants, that from these a selection of the most characteristic should be taken and a series of gramophone records produced of the best speakers available in each case. The results would be of great value to writers and dramatic Societies besides preserving dialects that were in danger of being lost.

In seconding the resolution, Mr. Lingard quoted Mr. Baldwin's recent remarks on the uniformity of speech, and said that the political speeches recently broadcast would have lost much of their value if the speakers had all spoken the standard B.B.C. speech.

Mr. Austin Hyde of the East Yorks Dialect Society said that wireless was a new peril in the villages and was producing a mongrel type of speech neither standard English nor dialect. He urged the British Drama League to do all in its power to preserve the dialects of the country.

Mr. Kerridge said that it was possible to make gramophone records for the price of £7, but some special arrangement might be made if the League could prepare a list of subscribers who would guarantee to buy a certain number of records.

Dr. Boas supported the resolution and said he thought some further precision would be needed in regard to the survey.

The resolution on being put to the vote was carried with two dissentients.

4. The Chairman stated that Mr. Holford Knight was unable to attend the Conference; and as it had not been possible to secure another proposer for the resolution on the Agenda, he asked the Conference if they would allow Mr. Harold Downs (Bath Playgoers Society) to move a resolution which he had intended bringing up under "Other Business."

This was agreed.

Proposed by Mr. Harold Downs:—

"That this Annual Conference asks the British Drama League (1) to inform members of the legal position in regard to playreadings; (2) to furnish affiliated societies with the names of dramatists who will permit their plays to be read and/or produced; and (3) to give details of the terms on which such plays can be read and/or produced. Further it asks for publication of particulars in "Drama" from time to time to enable members to keep their knowledge of these matters up to date, and for attempts to be made at once to secure common agreement on them."

Seconded by Mr. Holloway (Bristol Playgoers' Society).

In speaking to his resolution Mr. Downs said that the British Drama League was the body most suited for clearing up the many difficulties of societies giving playreadings, and he gave instances of dramatists who had withheld permission to read their plays. He also said that it was impossible to obtain Counsel's opinion upon the interpretation of the Copyright Act in such a way that one could feel absolutely confident that that opinion was sound.

Mr. Whitworth said that he always informed members of the League that a public playreading was the same as a performance in the eyes of the law. He thought the League had gone as far as it could when the agreement was made with the Society of Authors that they would recommend dramatists to consider a reading private if not more than 50 persons were present, and no money taken in any form. He thought it would be wiser to wait before taking further action until the proposed Dramatists League came into operation.

Mr. Benson thought that it was the wiser policy to leave things in their present admittedly unsatisfactory state and he therefore opposed the resolution.

Mr. Sheppard also opposed the resolution.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Benson proposed an amendment to the effect that the last sentence of the resolution viz., "and for attempts to be made at once to secure common agreement on them" should be deleted.

Mrs. Bacon (West Herts Players) seconded this amendment and the resolution as amended was read as follows:—

"That this Annual Conference asks the British Drama League (1) to inform members of the legal position in regard to playreadings; (2) to furnish affiliated societies with the names of dramatists who will permit their plays to be read and/or produced; and (3) to give details of the terms on which such plays can be read and/or produced. Further it asks for publication of particulars in "Drama" from time to time to enable members to keep their knowledge of these matters up to date."

and on being put to the vote was carried by a large majority.

5. Proposed by Mr. J. E. Bourne:—

"That the affiliation of amateur Societies to the British Drama League be made conditional upon their active support of the National Festival of Community Drama."

Seconded by Mr. T. R. Dawes (Damgasco Players).

Mr. Bourne explained that he did not mean the words "active support" to imply actual entry to the Festival, as it was obviously impossible for many Societies to enter but he urged that all Societies could and should support the Festival by attending its performances, assisting in local organisation, etc. He pointed out that the Festival provided a unique opportunity for Societies to have expert criticism on their work and also enabled them to see the work of other organisations.

Mr. Slater (Stockport Garrick Society) opposed the resolution, and stated that it would be impossible to make membership conditional on giving such support as Mr. Bourne indicated.

Miss Radford (Sheffield Playgoers) proposed an amendment that the resolution should read as follows:—

"That Societies affiliated to the British Drama League should be encouraged to support the National Festival of Community Drama."

This was seconded by Miss Wainwright (Penrhos College) and Mr. Downs.

Mr. Sharnan opposed both the resolution and amendment.

The amendment was withdrawn and the resolution on being put to the vote was defeated.

6. Proposed by Dr. F. S. Boas:—

"That this Conference desires to emphasise the importance of the study of Dramatic Art as worthy of the attention of the University Institutions of this country. It recognises with

MINUTES OF THE HULL CONFERENCE

gratification such attention as is already being paid to the subject, but it holds that it is desirable that further experiments should be made by university bodies firstly in establishing further diplomas and courses both practical and theoretical for those wishing to prepare for careers connected with drama and the theatre; and secondly in augmenting the supply of university extra-mural courses whereby a true appreciation, and therefore a still more successful practice of the drama may materially be assisted among the people in general."

Seconded by Principal A. E. Morgan.

Dr. Boas in proposing this resolution said that there had been a long divorcement between the Universities and the Stage. This antagonism was prolonged almost to the present day and it was a courageous act of Benjamin Jowett to invite Irving to lecture in Oxford some 40 years ago. Other signs appeared—the University of Liverpool established a Lectureship on Dramatic Art—the L.C.C. made arrangements for boys and girls to visit the Old Vic as a part of their ordinary school curriculum, and a decisive step was reached when the Report on the Teaching of English in England printed in 1921 stated that "we hope that the University of London will seriously consider the possibility of issuing a Diploma in Dramatic Art." London University at once established a Diploma granted after two years study at a recognised school—of which at present there were only two—the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. During the seven years the Diploma has been established, 119 certificates have been gained, and he saw no reason why a similar diploma should not be obtainable in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds and Hull.

In seconding the resolution Principal Morgan said that we have only begun to till the field of Drama, and as the field is more and more tilled the greater will be the difficulty of obtaining competent tutors. He pointed out that there were certain inevitable risks in undertaking this new work but he deprecated the policy of "safety first" in this connection. He emphasised the actual growing demand for teachers in adult classes and gave some particulars of the work in this direction undertaken at University College, Hull. He pointed out that comparatively few students would go on the stage as the greater majority would be needed as tutors.

Miss Fogerty opposed the resolution on two grounds (1) Overcrowding the profession and (2) the inevitable lowering of standard. She pointed out that the Professional stage needed only 30 new actors or actresses a year, and the stage was already hopelessly overcrowded.

Miss Fogerty proposed as an amendment that the resolution should read as follows:—

"That this Conference desires to emphasise the importance of the study of Dramatic Art as worthy of the attention of the University Institutions of this Country. Firstly as tending to promote the establishment of a high standard of spoken English and secondly as augmenting the supply of university extra-mural courses whereby a true appreciation, and therefore a still more successful practice of the drama may materially be assisted among the people in general."

Mr. Boughton Chatwin seconded the amendment.

Miss Lillias Howson in opposing the amendment said that it ought not to be necessary to go to London in order to obtain the Diploma.

Mr. Sharman agreed with this view.

The amendment on being put to the vote was lost by 20 votes.

In view of the opinions expressed during the discussion, Principal Morgan suggested that the reference to vocational training for work on the professional stage should be omitted from the resolution. This was agreed to and the Resolution in the following form was then carried by a substantial majority:—

"That this Conference desires to emphasise the importance of the study of Dramatic Art as worthy of the attention of the University Institutions of this country. It recognises with gratification such attention as is already being paid to the subject, but it holds that it is desirable that further experiments should be made by university bodies, firstly in establishing further diplomas and courses both practical and theoretical in dramatic art; and secondly in augmenting the supply of university extra-mural courses whereby a true appreciation, and, therefore, a still more successful practice of the drama may materially be assisted among the people in general."

7. Election of New National Committee for the National Festival of Community Drama.

The following members were elected by ballot:—Mr. C. B. Purdom, Mr. B. L. Sutcliffe, Mr. George Sharman.

8. Place of Next Conference.

The Chairman reported that he had received three invitations—from the Leicester Drama Society, from the Halifax Theatians and the Edinburgh Committee of the Scottish Community Drama Association. It was decided by vote that the invitation of the Leicester Drama Society, that the Conference in 1932 should be held in Leicester, should be accepted. Mr. Whitworth expressed the thanks of the Conference to the three cities and its regrets that the invitations to Edinburgh and Halifax could not be accepted for the time being.

The meeting then closed.

THE NEW OXFORD SOCIETY.

This comparatively new Society were ambitious in their choice of "The House with the Twisty Windows" and "The Young Idea" for presentation at the Conway Hall on November 4th. It was obviously difficult to obtain the atmosphere of a Russian cellar on such a prim stage without a special set, and the players were then hampered in their efforts to create the nervous tension of Miss Pakington's little drama.

The Noel Coward piece is too seldom accepted by amateurs as requiring a definite manner. The performance by the New Oxford Society proved that the cast had ability and spirit, but that these qualities would have been better directed into a medium of which the company had greater understanding. Yet a brave show was made, and the very vigour with which this play of many situations was tackled largely compensated for defects in diction and style.

JOHN BOURNE.

We are asked to state that photographs of the Hull Conference Group taken outside the Guildhall can be obtained from the Hull Press (Photo) Agency, 7, Waltham Street, Hull, at the following prices: 10 x 8 at 1/6., or 8½ x 6½ at 1/- each unmounted. If mounted, 1/- each extra.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

BOURNEMOUTH LITTLE THEATRE.

THE Bournemouth Little Theatre is almost unique in being one of the first theatres in the country to be built by amateur players for the use of amateurs. It was erected at a cost of £22,000 by the Bournemouth Little Theatre Club (formerly the Bournemouth Dramatic and Orchestral Club), an organisation which was initiated twelve years ago, as a permanent home for the Club's activities.

The theatre was opened on June 15th this year by St. John Ervine, assisted by the Mayor of Bournemouth (Alderman P. M. Bright), the Mayoress (Mrs. P. Hardy), Mr. H. Russell Cotes and the Rev. H. Wilburn Ennis. After the opening ceremony a performance of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" was given by members of the Club to a crowded audience. Mr. St. John Ervine, in his criticism of the play after the performance, congratulated both producer and players on a highly creditable production. "The play you saw to-night," he said, "makes very great demands on everyone who undertakes to do it. Therefore your company has been extremely ambitious, but not over-ambitious. Their performance was an exceedingly creditable one, when you remember, as you ought to remember, the circumstances in which it was prepared. Professional players would take about a month of continuous rehearsals all day and probably all night. Your company have only had their leisure time, their evenings, in which to prepare an extremely difficult and arduous production. When you remember that, you will realise the immense amount of credit due to Mr. George Stone for the very skilful way in which he put this play on the stage."

"The Merry Wives of Windsor" was successfully repeated for three successive performances, and the remainder of the opening week was given over to performances of John L. Balderston's "Berkeley Square." This was also performed by members of the Club and ably produced by Miss Dorothy Rowe.

The Bournemouth Little Theatre Club is fortunate in having been able to realise its ambition in erecting its own Theatre, the foundation-stone of which was laid only eight months ago by Lord Howard de Walden. The Theatre itself was designed by local architects, Messrs. Seal and Hardy, and built by local builders, Messrs. Walter Hoare and Sons. It is an attractive building in the modern style, somewhat severe in design. A drawing of the interior was reproduced in the November number of "Drama."

During the past summer season, the Theatre has been let to a professional company, the Brandon-Thomas Seasons.

The Bournemouth Little Theatre Club resumed its activities at the end of September with the production of Galsworthy's "Family Man."

DRAMA IN BOYS' CLUB.

On behalf of the National Association of Boys' Clubs, the League has arranged a practical dramatic course for Club-leaders and others. The course will be held on Wednesday evenings at the Bernhard Baron Settlement, near Aldgate, London. It will be opened on Jan. 6th by Mr. R. C. Sherriff. A number of well-known professionals, including Mr. Miles Malleon, will give demonstrations and conduct rehearsals. Prospectus post free from 8, Adelphi Terrace.

FOUR WINDS REPERTORY THEATRE.

James Bridie's play "The Switchback" first seen at Malvern last Summer was presented by the Four Winds Repertory Theatre at Tonbridge on October 21st and 22nd, and at Oxted on October 24th. The play is almost too full of theories and ideas for digestion at one sitting and, I should imagine, reads much better than it plays. The performance by the Oxted and Limpsfield Players was interesting, although some of the acting was a little uneven. Mrs. Whitmore who produced deserves praise as does Mr. Hugh Keen for an intelligent and sensitive performance.

The second production of this Repertory was Gogol's "Government Inspector" played by the Holywell Players. This performance stands out as one of the best amateur shows seen in recent years. The team work was excellent and a large cast was manipulated on the small stage at Three Bridges with surprising ingenuity. The acting was uniformly good, the play went with a swing, and was always amusing and pleasing to the eye, the setting and costumes being excellent.

The next production of the Four Winds Repertory Theatre will be John Drinkwater's "Mary Stuart" performed by the Tonbridge Little Theatre on Dec. 15th and 16th at Tonbridge, and Dec. 19th at Oxted. Judging by the first two performances the venture is likely to prove an experiment well worth while, we hope financially as well as artistically.

FRANCES BRIGGS.

THE UNNAMED SOCIETY.

The Unnamed Society opened its season with "Roar China!"—an event in nine scenes by S. Tretiskov, translated from the Russian by F. Pokrova and Barbara Nixon. Although the Society has already produced seventy-four plays, most of them of a decidedly experimental nature, this was, possibly, one of the strangest. We were able to give first performances in England, owing to the fact that the Lord Chamberlain banned the proposed production of the play at the Cambridge Festival Theatre last April; doubtless because of its "anti-British" political basis. The Unnamed Society is, of course, in no way interested in politics; the play was produced because it offered a chance to try a new medium, and also because it happens to be a full-blooded and rather vivid melodrama. The characters are types only, seen in the flat rather than in the round, there is no "love interest" whatever, and the tragedy appears singularly harsh and unsympathetic to audiences mildly inebriated by the sugar-and-water of the contemporary stage. The difficulties of presentation are increased by the fact that there are no star parts in the enormous cast; every actor is vital to the action of the play. Perhaps the most successful moment was at the end when the frenzied Chinese, fresh from the execution of two innocent men, surged across the stage howling "Out of our China! Out! Out! Out! Out!" Neither curtain nor scenery was used in the production; a formal suggestion of a Gunboat occupied the back of the stage, a blue river was placed in front, and yellow levels represented China. The press surpassed itself in an orgy of contradictory statements. But after fourteen years of hard work we are used to this.

F. SLADEN-SMITH.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE MEDWAY THEATRE CLUB.

I have written so often about the inability of certain amateurs to get the Noel Coward spirit (impossible companies attempt it) that it is a relief to record the success of the Medway Theatre Club in "I'll Leave it to You." The young Dermotts at Maidstone were a dynamic family and each made his or her part a vital study. Mr. Bernard Benson, as producer, had whipped his team into the right pace with the result that we were given some thoroughly good "theatre." If only the actor who played the key part of Uncle Daniel had been more robust, and one or two minor matters of diction had been given attention, the success of the production would have been complete.

JOHN BOURNE.

"THE VISION."

A Pageant play under the direction of Miss Nole was given at the Albert Hall, London, last month. It conveyed in realistic scenes the search for God and the prayer and trials of Christianity throughout the ages. The first scenes depicted early sacrifices as an atonement to the Gods. Then Greek dances showed the search for God in beauty, and so on till we beheld salient episodes in the body of Christ. After many later scenes, a vast crowd, composed of all nations, joined in creating an impression of the invincible powers of Good over Evil. The acting of the 2,000 performers was most proficient and the music very beautiful.

K. ST. CLARE ALLANSON.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PLAYS FOR AMATEURS.

DEAR SIR,

I read with interest your critics comments on "Eighty Plays for Amateurs." During the last three years I have been "producer" to a Women's Institute and have found the greatest difficulty in getting suitable plays. The objections to the many I have read may be stated as follows: (1) Not enough colour. (2) Not enough characters. It seems to be taken for granted, by their writers, that village life is the best subject for village actors—a fundamental error. Cottage women do not want to act on the stage their own hum-drum affairs. They desire to be taken out of that atmosphere and out of themselves; to dress up and enter a different sphere of action. And in most Institutes there are, at least, half a dozen women eager to act. In my Institute there are about twenty. What is wanted is a play with four or five leading parts and several small ones: and the setting should be anywhere on earth but in a country cottage—unless it is a cottage of a hundred years ago, or more. I think, too, that short two-act or three-act plays would be welcome. I have adapted "The Cricket on the Hearth" in three scenes, to play one hour, and it has been very successful three times.

MARY L. PENDERED.

THE DUBLIN GATE THEATRE.

DEAR SIR,

I read with great interest your article in the November issue of "Drama" on the Dublin Gate Theatre, wherein you mention "Diarmuid and Grainne." I have as I write a programme of the play and the prompt book, by me, and I feel that I am justified in elucidating a point which I don't think was quite clear. Michael MacLiammoir wrote the play in Gaelic when it was performed at the opening of Taibhdheau na Gaillimhe and later translated it into English for the Dublin production. The treatment of the legend and its dramatic subject together with the extreme beauty of the Language, mark it as a play of unusual merit. It is interesting to note that both W. B. Yeates and Lady Gregory have put this same legend into dramatic form.

Perhaps you would permit me to add that Mr. MacLiammoir's play is being performed, at his request, at King Georges' Hall on December 29th and 30th.

Yours etc.,

L. WARWICK-JAMES.

TOLSTOY AND SHAKESPEARE.

SIR,

Even the least important of Tolstoy's writings, and those which seemed stillborn, have a way of reappearing and attracting attention. Mr. Gordon Craig now draws attention to "Shakespeare and the Drama," of which he seems to have heard from Mr. Fulop Miller's recent volume of republished articles, humorously called "New Light on Tolstoy." The essay in question is only obtainable in the large illustrated volume of "Tolstoy on Art" and is comparatively little known.

I have recently had the privilege of reading in MS "The Defence of Shakespeare," a work by Mr. G. Wilson Knight, the well-known young Shakespearian critic, which will I understand not be published before next spring. In it, remarkably enough, that ardent devotee of our national dramatist does justice to the force of Tolstoy's criticism which, as he points out, is much in line with the views expressed by the late Robert Bridges.

If Mr. Craig's article draws attention to Mr. Knight's excellent work, it will have served a good purpose.

Apparently forgetting "War and Peace," Mr. Craig wonders why Tolstoy did not create something "unforgettable" or become a Mussolini (a strange role indeed for one who deliberately stood aside from politics), and seems to attribute his failure to do so to the fact that he regarded art as an integral part of life, in which conduct (with which "ethics" are concerned) plays so important a part. But in this contrast between the opinion, on the one side, that art has nothing to do with ethics, and on the other, that art is an integral part of our life, is not Mr. Craig old-fashioned, and was it not Tolstoy who first clearly showed the inevitable and vital connection of art to the whole of life?

Yours truly,

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